

THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 5 Newsletter for the Downtown, Waterfront, North End, Beacon Hill, South Station and West End November-December 1992

Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning, and whatever else affects life in Boston. *The Boston Informer* was created by us—an architect, a transportation planner and a management consultant—to meet this goal.

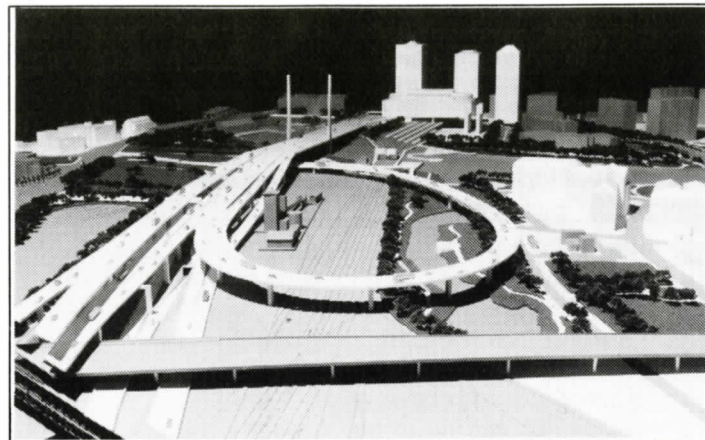
So welcome to *The Boston Informer* and thanks for subscribing. Anthony Casendino, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.



Charles River Crossing

What exactly is the State proposing to replace the infamous Scheme Z? An official Notice of Project Change, filed with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs in October, details the proposed changes. Key design modifications

include the elimination of five of the six loop ramps on the north bank of the river (replaced with tunnels) and a 10-lane, single-deck bridge instead of the 16-lane, three-bridge scheme. However, the revised Charles River Crossing, estimated to cost \$450 million more than Scheme Z, presents a new set of environmental concerns and questions about funding, schedule, and constructability. This issue of *The Boston Informer* features the revised plan in a special section.



Revised Charles River Crossing from Gilmore Bridge
Source: Central Artery/Tunnel Project; photo by Andy Ryan



South Boston Piers Transitway

The MBTA's proposed transit service to the South Boston Piers area recently moved forward with release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. The project was conceived in

1987 to evaluate transit alternatives to serve what was expected to be unprecedented growth in the Fan Pier/Fort Point Channel area. Any project built was expected to be a model for transit financing, as private developers who would gain from the transit would help finance it. The study developed into an analysis of five alternatives and four different modes in a full Environmental Impact Report (1989) for the state environmental review process.

The Fort Point Channel Underground Transitway emerged as the preferred alternative. Trackless trolleys, similar to those in Watertown and North Cambridge, or dual-propulsion buses (diesel/electric) would run underground from Boston Marine Industrial Park in South Boston to South Station to Boylston.

Recognizing that funding is tight, two "minimum operable segment" (MOS) alternatives, shorter versions of the Full Build to Boylston, were studied. Service to Boylston is not likely to happen for many years (\$682 million total), but could be extended later.

Joint construction with the Central Artery/Tunnel project for a stretch along Atlantic Avenue would achieve a 40 percent cost savings for that part.



Water Transportation

Moving people by boat: water transportation may become a significant part of Boston's transportation network, a result of the Central Artery/Tunnel and Harbor cleanup projects.

A four-month study of water transportation in the Inner Harbor, sponsored by Massport, Central Artery/Tunnel Project, and the MBTA, will take another look at the key issues involved in water shuttles and commuter boats. This study will essentially update the 1989 Boston Inner Harbor Water Transportation Study which identified five downtown water shuttle routes that would link North Station and South Boston, Fort Point Channel, Charlestown Navy Yard and Logan Airport. The new study will also look at a "Cultural Loop" and will consider water taxis and park and float.

A specific issue that will be studied is terminal sites in the Fort Point Channel. The Massachusetts Highway Department has committed to providing docking facilities in two downtown locations, North Station and Fort Point Channel, for the Central Artery project. The terminal in the North Station area will be built at Lovejoy Wharf, behind the Stop & Shop building on Causeway Street. The Fort Point Channel terminal, originally proposed for the Boston Edison substation site, is now being reconsidered. Two distinct areas will be studied for the Fort Point Channel terminal: inside the New Northern Avenue Bridge at either the Edison site or the Children's Museum, and outside the New Northern Avenue Bridge at Fan Pier, east; Rowes Wharf expansion; or Old Northern Avenue Bridge, west.

This study, like its predecessor, will not be focused exclusively on construction mitigation, but will examine relevant time frames for introducing new services, in the short term, mid term, and after Artery completion.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Update on Haymarket Vent Building
- Temporary tour bus parking
- Fan Pier Courthouse Commitments
- Special Section: Revised Charles River Crossing

Suffolk University wants to demolish the buildings at 110-120 Tremont St. for its new law school. For five years current owners Olympia & York tried unsuccessfully to propose commercial development on the site. The buildings are eligible for listing on the National Register and are on the State Register. Consultants for Suffolk reported that reusing the buildings for classroom, library and courtroom use is not feasible, and that restructuring of the buildings would be complicated by multiple code requirements.

The Environmental Affairs Office denied Suffolk's request for a waiver to demolish the historic buildings. Suffolk must prepare an environmental impact report to evaluate the impacts; agencies and the public will be able to comment. The University has stated emphatically it will do nothing on the site unless demolition is allowed. The proposed law school has been touted as a spark for revitalizing the Midtown Cultural District and Tremont Street, and other "long-term environmental and economic benefits for Boston."

Greyhound Bus and Vermont Transit have left their facility on St. James Street and relocated to South Station where they are boarding passengers in the temporary station on Atlantic Avenue. The temporary station, a high-quality, functional facility, will be in place until the fall of 1994 when the South Station bus terminal over the train tracks is completed and all the intercity buses are moved into the new terminal. The old Greyhound station, owned by Macomber Development, may be vacant for some time as the development company said it has no immediate plans for its reuse.

Planners for the Central Artery surface streets are grappling with how to provide a safe, pleasant pedestrian crossing at the intersection of New Northern Avenue, Atlantic Avenue and Oliver Street, an area where there is an enormous expanse of pavement and an on-ramp to the depressed Central Artery. The importance of this connection will become even more obvious with the new Federal Courthouse on the Fan Pier that will draw more pedestrians through the intersection.

Plans for the Central Artery surface streets have created a controversy recently as the State proposed to increase the number of lanes from three lanes to four. When the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was approved, the state mandated that the surface artery be no more than three lanes in each direction, one of which could be parking.

However, recent plans have shown the pair of surface arterials with four lanes, three travel lanes and one parking lane. Because this represents a significant change in the approved project, the state will file a Notice of Project Change with the Environmental Affairs Office. Although no date has been set for this filing, details and an explanation of the change will be available for public review and comment for 30 days after publication.

Vent building #4 at Haymarket, the most programmed in the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, is finally under design. Arrowstreet and CBT, architects, are jointly working on the combination vent building-market-parking garage-office space-MBTA entrance. The vent building will serve as both air intake and exhaust, with two exhaust stacks 125 feet high and the air intake stack at 90 feet high. It is no longer planned to house the Haymarket pushcart vendors on the first floor. It will, however, be dedicated to retail. Final design is expected by the end of 1993 and construction completed by the end of 1996. As a result of the construction on the long-vacant Parcel 7, once slated for a Holiday Inn, modifications will be made to the MBTA Haymarket station. A new mezzanine will be created and the entrance reconfigured.

What They're Saying

"The Artery/Tunnel project will create many spin-off jobs, such as jobs like this coffee service."
Central Artery/Tunnel community liaison

♦

"They stop at barriers. We don't."
Sergiu Luchian, MHD engineer, on why Massachusetts would not use gates to close gridlocked highway lanes as is done in Oslo

♦

"We'll pay for one-half of the Boston Harbor cleanup."
Aide to President-elect Bill Clinton

What's Up?

1 Where are the commercial tour buses going to park during the utility relocation construction in the waterfront area? Although disturbing any surface-street parking will cause problems, displaced tour buses have fewer alternatives. The Central Artery/Tunnel project has proposed creating a temporary parking lot for 12 tour buses on the open land adjacent to the Artery, west of Atlantic Avenue. The buses will be moved again when construction on the mainline Central Artery begins. A likely location is the vacant rental car lot opposite the Aquarium Garage on Central/Milk streets.

2 The Federal Courthouse on the Fan Pier has undergone a major redesign. The original scheme met with opposition from state and city agencies and community groups over its design and the lack of public access. The General Services Administration's Record of Decision commits to the "parameters" and public-benefit commitments specified in the State's conditional approval of the project. The conditions focused on expanding public access to the site and encouraging water-dependent uses.

As originally proposed by the GSA, the courthouse violated nearly all city and state zoning codes and regulations for waterfront buildings. The GSA's commitments include: public waterfront park and Harborwalk; dock for commuter ferries and excursion ships; museum and public exhibit space; auditorium and lounge for community use; public restaurants, inside and outside, open seven days and evenings.

The GSA will also create a Fan Pier Task Force, chaired by the Environmental Affairs Secretary Susan Tierney and Fort Point Channel Citizens Advisory Committee chair, Larry Dwyer. The Task Force, with representatives of city and state agencies, South Boston residents, design professionals, open-space activists, and more, will look not only at public-access design issues, but also at funding strategies for site improvements.

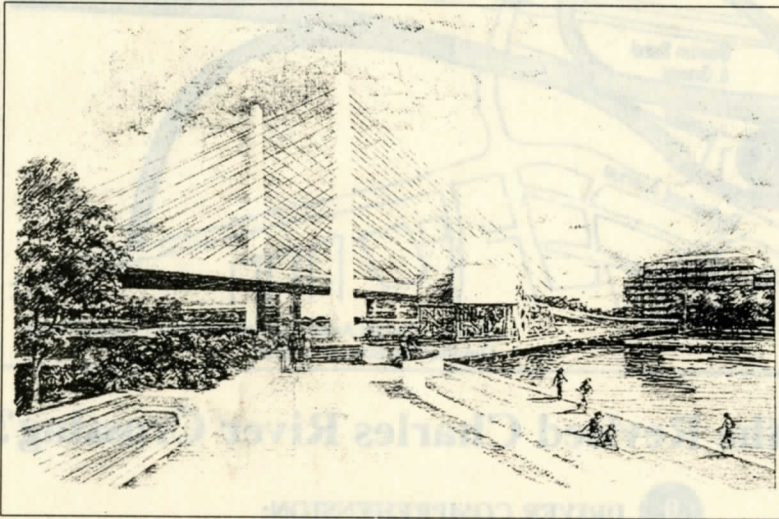
3 Central Artery utility relocations: The key downtown waterfront construction contract for relocating the maze of sewer, gas, telephone, and other utilities won't begin until at least April 1993, several years behind schedule. Only one of nine downtown utility contracts is currently under construction (C14A1, intercepting sewer in Turnpike area). According to a November "Draft/Preliminary" schedule, construction is supposed to begin on the Clinton Street to Commercial Street contract (C14C2) in May 1993; Congress Street to Broad Street (C14C1), September 1993; and Broad Street to State Street (C14C4), April 1994. However, construction of the depressed Central Artery mainline is supposed to be underway at the same time, according to another official schedule. But if the Central Artery planners decide to incorporate the contract for the utility work into the construction contract for the mainline, more delays are possible.

Safety first...The State has made a major commitment to ensuring safety on the Central Artery/Tunnel project by hiring Arthur D. Little Co. of Cambridge (ADL) at \$11.4 million for three years to do risk assessment for the project. ADL, in this unique, specialized role, will be setting up a safety system, working with over 75 contractors, bureaucrats, and residents, to establish quality control procedures.

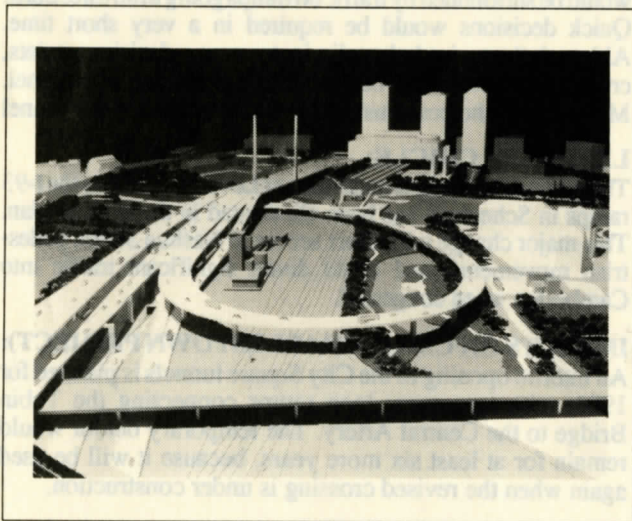
Who's where...Don Marshall, Central Artery Project Manager for Bechtel Corp., reassigned; Tad Wiegler, Bechtel executive, former Chicago and Washington, DC, transit chief, to Artery. Project Executive. Mark Primack, Move Massachusetts 2000, GreenSpace Alliance, and Valerie Southern, Federal Highway, to Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, asst. secretaries. Laurinda Bedingfield, MHD deputy chief engineer of operations, to MHD commissioner. Curtis M. Davis, Central Artery head of urban design and facilities planning, to Central Artery director of design/engineering. Sarah Campbell, MBTA Construction, to Parsons Brinckerhoff. Jack Wright, MBTA Construction (South Boston Piers, Aquarium station) to Central Artery project.

New Charles River Crossing Central Artery Plans Replace Infamous Scheme Z Proposal

Revised plan would eliminate all but one ramp across river



Revised Charles River Bridge and open space from north side of river
Source: Central Artery/Tunnel Project



Revised Charles River Crossing from Gilmore Bridge
Source: Central Artery/Tunnel Project; photo by Andy Ryan

Crossing design. Over an 18-month period, the Committee reviewed over 20 alternatives.

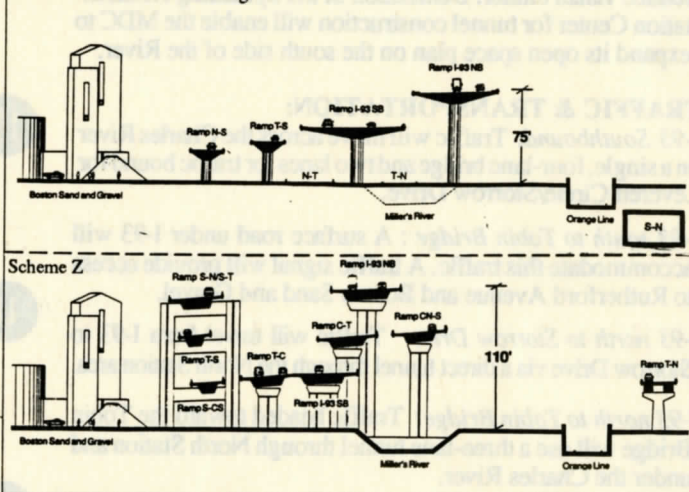
The Bridge Design Review Committee's purview extended beyond looking just at aesthetic and environmental impacts of the bridge and the ramps. The Committee looked at local and regional traffic issues; high-occupancy vehicle lanes; the North Station-South Station rail; and impacts on development, among other issues.

Scheme Z included six massive loop ramps across the river; three bridges carrying 18 lanes of traffic; 11 supporting piers in the Charles River; confusing traffic flow; and parkland that would be in heavy shadows. The revised plan eliminates five of the loop ramps by using tunnels under the Charles River and creates a single 10-lane bridge, reducing impacts on parkland and navigation.

The evolution of the new plan proposed to replace the infamous Scheme Z Charles River Crossing design begins with the initial approval of Scheme Z by the State Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in January 1991. Although EOEA approved the Scheme Z design, it did so on the condition that the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) continue to work toward reducing the environmental and aesthetic impacts. EOEA required MHD to include residents, environmentalists, and civic and business leaders in the review of Scheme Z.

The Bridge Design Review Committee, a 42-member interdisciplinary group, was formed in late January to improve the Charles River

Revised Charles River Crossing

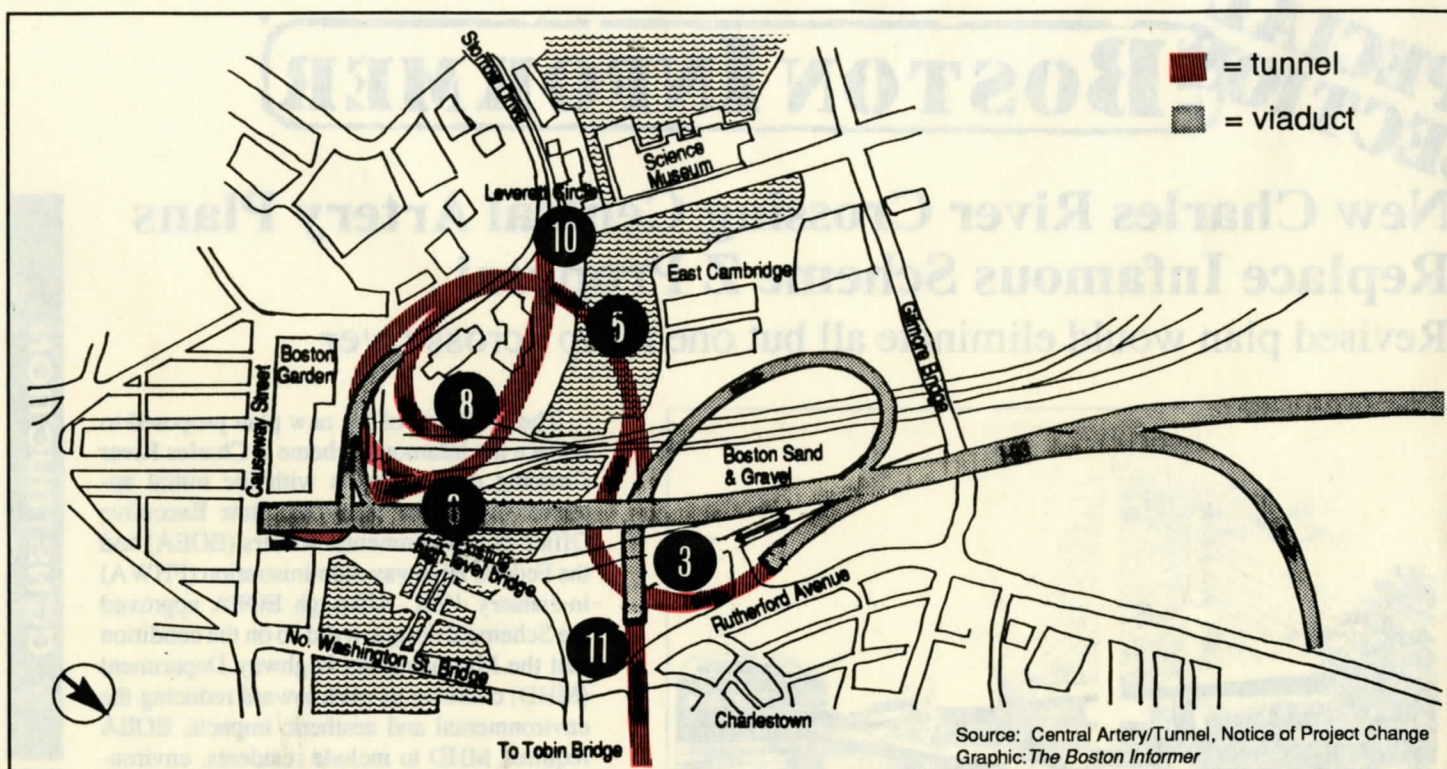


Section at loop ramps

Source: Central Artery/Tunnel Project

The MHD filed a "Notice of Project Change" (NPC) with EOEA detailing the revisions. A NPC is required when a project changes substantially and there may be new impacts to analyze. The public comment period ended on November 23 and EOEA has reviewed comments from agencies and the public. EOEA's ruling on the project change will state what MHD must do to provide additional information on a number of issues before an approval on the revised Charles River Crossing will be issued.

Bar chart to right represents the estimated time to perform environmental studies of the revised plan, design, and construct the crossing.



What are the key features of the Revised Charles River Crossing?

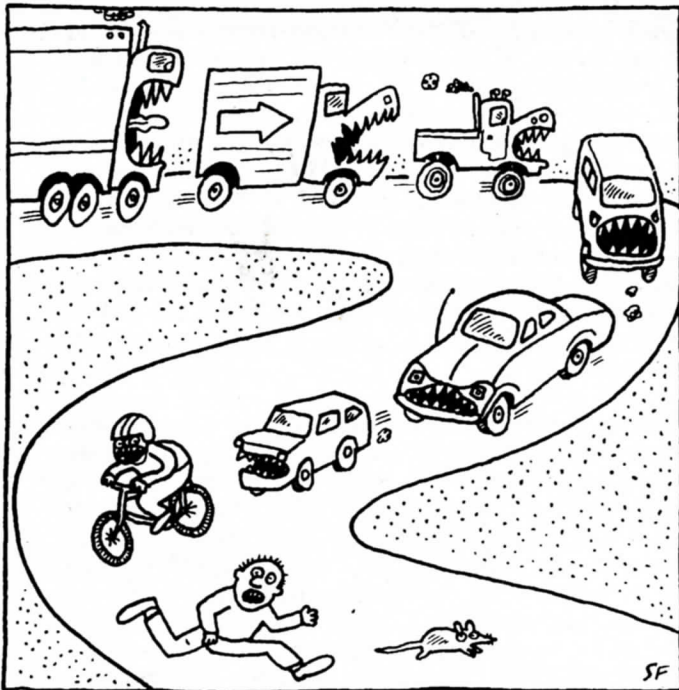
- 1 VISUAL:**
The elimination of five of the loop ramps in Charlestown/East Cambridge and the substitution of a single, 10-lane bridge will reduce visual clutter. Demolition of the Spaulding Rehabilitation Center for tunnel construction will enable the MDC to expand its open space plan on the south side of the River.
- 2 TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION:**
I-93 Southbound: Traffic will move across the Charles River on a single, four-lane bridge and two lanes for traffic bound for Leverett Circle/Storrow Drive.
- 3 I-93 south to Tobin Bridge :** A surface road under I-93 will accommodate this traffic. A traffic signal will provide access to Rutherford Avenue and Boston Sand and Gravel.
- 4 I-93 north to Storrow Drive:** Traffic will travel from I-93 to Storrow Drive via a direct tunnel through the North Station area.
- 5 I-93 north to Tobin Bridge:** Traffic headed toward the Tobin Bridge will use a three-lane tunnel through North Station and under the Charles River.
- 6 HOV:** A mile-long high-occupancy vehicle lane on I-93 southbound for buses, taxis, carpools, etc., will be essentially like the existing I-93 diamond lane. MBTA buses headed for Haymarket are forced to use a circuitous, and potentially
- 7 Local access:** An on-ramp at New Sudbury Street will provide access to I-93 northbound, an alternative to the only other downtown on-ramp at Northern Avenue. This ramp was formerly the Traverse Street on-ramp which had been eliminated.
- 8 VENTILATION:**
One ventilation building for this entire new tunnel system will be needed.
- 9 DRIVER COMPREHENSION:**
Drivers in Scheme Z's complicated network of roads and ramps would be surrounded by traffic on ramps going in all directions. Quick decisions would be required in a very short time. Although the revised plan eliminates many decisions points, critical decisions must be made before entering the tunnel. Many other choices must be in the confines of the tunnel
- 10 LEVERETT CIRCLE:**
The planned eastbound underpass at Leverett Circle to the I-93 ramps in Scheme Z has been eliminated in the revised plan. This major change will affect access to Nashua Street, pedestrian movements, and could divert significant traffic into Cambridge when congested.
- 11 IMPACTS ON CANA (CHARLESTOWN PROJECT):**
An interim opening of the City Square tunnels is planned for 1994, with temporary loop ramps connecting the Tobin Bridge to the Central Artery. The temporary detour would remain for at least six more years, because it will be used again when the revised crossing is under construction.
- 12 COST ESTIMATE:**
The revised crossing is projected to cost over \$900 million, some \$450 million more than Scheme Z.
- 13 NEXT STEPS:**
Issues subject to further evaluation during the design process include traffic analysis of Leverett Circle, intersections on Rutherford Avenue, the intersection of the New Sudbury on-ramp with local streets and others. Also, analyses of the possibility of a northbound HOV lane, a material disposals plan for excavate, air quality, noise, wetlands and waterways, and Registry building will be done. However, it must be remembered that Scheme Z is the approved design...

Whom do I contact??

James J. Kerasiotes, Secretary of
Transportation...call 973-7800; office is on
third floor of State Transportation Bldg.

Fan Pier Task Force for the federal courthouse.
...call Larry Dwyer at 635-4744

For information on the proposed South
Boston Piers Transitway...call Dorrie
Pizzella, MBTA, 722-6122



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The Boston Traffic Food Chain

You were asking...

- Q. How many bus berths are planned for the South Station Transportation Center? Where will the rest go?**
- A.** The bus terminal will have berths for 29 buses (Greyhound, Plymouth & Brockton, etc.). The demand for berths exceeds what will be provided, and the MBTA is devising ways to accommodate more, including strengthening the parking deck to carry buses. However, the MBTA's long-term goal is to build the rest of the bus station when Tufts University does its air rights development. This could be in 10 years.
- Q. What is the Grand Junction Railroad and why do I keep hearing about it?**
- A.** The Grand Junction runs from the Beacon Yards in Allston under the B.U. Bridge, through Cambridgeport to Somerville. Currently used for freight by Conrail, the MBTA moves trains to Somerville for maintenance on the line. The MBTA recently approved funding to study the railroad line as part of the proposed circumferential, or crosstown, transit service. MBTA consultants will be evaluating running a Blue Line branch on the Grand Junction.
- Q. When will the Old Colony rail restoration be done?**
- A.** Three branches were originally to be in service by 1993, helpful in reducing Central Artery congestion. Now two branches (Middleborough and Plymouth) are set to open in 1996.

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